TESTIMONY RE: Proposed Bill No. 5888
AN ACT CONCERNING COLLEGE CREDIT FOR TRANSFER FROM A LICENSED PRACTICAL NURSING EDUCATION PROGRAM INTO A REGISTERED NURSING EDUCATION PROGRAM
February 24, 2011

Good morning Senator Bye, Representative Willis and members of the Higher Education and Employment Advancement Committee. Thank-you for the opportunity to provide testimony on behalf of the Connecticut Nurses' Association (CNA), the professional organization for registered nurses in Connecticut.

I am Mary Jane Williams Ph.D., RN current chairperson of Government Relations Committee for the Connecticut Nurses Association and professor emeritus from Central Connecticut State University. I have practiced nursing for over 45 years and have been educating nurses in Connecticut in both the public and private sector for over 35 years.

The purpose and intent of this legislation is to address the shortage of registered nurses in the state of Connecticut by allowing Licensed Practical Nurses (LPN's) to move easily into a registered nursing program.

Mobility within the profession of nursing has been on our agenda since the 1965 Position Paper on "Entry into Professional Practice". This position paper advocated for a Bachelors Degree in Nursing (BSN) as the qualification for licensure at the professional level. Over the past 45 years leadership in nursing has invested time and energy to create the mechanisms to seamlessly mobilize nurses from the LPN to the Associate Degree in Nursing and onto the BSN/and or higher.

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My colleagues have provided you with materials that explain our current mobility process. Work continues to improve the process across all levels of education. Most recently the Community College System has moved to dual admission for Associate Degree Nurses (ADN) into BSN programs.

Nurse educators are aware of the growing nursing shortage as the profession ages. Peter Buerhaus predicts that by 2025 we will need 260,000 professional nurses as patient's age and present with complicated multisystem failure. The shortage will be growing issues as nurses retire over the next decade. The Bureau of Labor Statistics predicts 581, 500 new RN positions equating to a 22% increase by 2018.

So all we need to do is to educate more nurses and mobilize the ones already in nursing to a RN program. That's the sticky wicket. We do not have enough space in our programs currently to move significant numbers of individuals into nursing. We do not have enough faculty, enough faculty positions and we do not have sufficient clinical space to move large numbers into the clinical laboratory. However, we have a clear mandate from several organizations that have been studying the "Future of Nursing" and the role of nursing in the provision of health care across the continuum.

So what should we do, Connecticut is in a unique position. We are a small state and we all talk to each other. I believe it is time for all of us, educators, administrators, nurses, to think globally and proactively to address this proposed legislation and design a model for the state that is of high quality and cost effective.

We need to heed the recommendations of The Robert Wood Johnson Study on the Future of Nursing and the Institute of Medicine Report that recommends
   • Nurses should practice to the full extent of their education and training.
   • Nurses should achieve higher levels of education and training through an improved education system that promotes seamless academic progression.

• Nurses should be full partners, with physicians and other health care professionals, in redesigning health care in the United States.

• Effective workforce planning and policy making requires better data collection and information infrastructure. (IOM)

It is our recommendation that a task force be established to assess the issues in the IOM recommendations and to investigate models to address this current proposal. Our goal should be to develop statewide infrastructure to address ongoing ever-changing issues related to professional education and mobility.

This proposed legislation provides us with a huge opportunity, at a very significant time in our professional evolution, to create a model to address our state work force needs and to create viable solutions for nurses who seek mobility from one level of education to another. The model must be based on sound educational principles in order to prepare high quality health professionals. This model could potentially be replicated statewide.

We need to be progressive and proactive. We need to develop a high quality cost effective model that takes into consideration the needs of the individuals we intend to educate, working adult learners. This is an opportunity to prevent a crisis in health care. In order to provide care for the citizens of Connecticut we need to seize the moment and move forward in an organized fashion as we create a seamless mechanism for mobility across all levels of nursing education.

I have attached the two reports I refer to for your reference. Thank You